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August 25, 2004

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – NEW
HORIZON/SYDIA GROUP HOME, INC., NEW HORIZON #1, NEW
HORIZON #2**

We have completed a review of New Horizon #1 and New Horizon #2 Group Homes (Group Home or Agency) operated by the New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc. Each Group Home contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

New Horizon #1 Group Home is a six-bed facility, which provides care for children ages 13-17 who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, New Horizon #1 Group Home was providing services for six DCFS children. New Horizon #1 Group Home is located in the Fifth District.

New Horizon #2 Group Home is a six-bed facility, which provides care for children ages 15-18, who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, New Horizon #2 Group Home was providing services for six DCFS children. New Horizon #2 Group Home is located in the Fifth District.

Scope of Review

The purpose of the review was to determine whether the Agency was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement. Additionally, the review covered basic child safety and licensing issues, and included an evaluation of the Agency's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, facility inspections, and interviews with two children placed in each Group Home at the time of the review. Interviews with the residents were designed to obtain their perspectives on the program services provided by the Agency, and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Summary of Findings

Generally, the Agency was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement. However, the Agency's Group Home facilities are not well maintained and numerous program areas need improvement.

Horizon #1

New Horizon #1 Group Home needs to make substantial repairs to its facility; provide monthly psychiatric evaluations for all residents receiving psychotropic medications; and provide residents with at least the required weekly minimum base allowance.

Horizon #2

New Horizon #2 Group Home needs to make substantial repairs to its facility; provide residents with age appropriate and accessible recreational equipment; provide residents with a sufficient quantity of age appropriate books and reading materials; properly store food to prevent contamination and spoilage; maintain current Needs and Services Plans that have realistic, measurable, and time specific goals for all residents; provide documentation to show placement workers' participation in the development and update of the Needs and Services Plans; provide monthly psychiatric evaluations for all residents receiving psychotropic medications; ensure there are fair and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior; and provide residents with regular opportunities to maintain photo albums/life books.

Attached is a detailed report of the review findings.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. The Agency's management is required to provide a corrective action plan to the Children's Group Home Ombudsman within 15 business days from the receipt of this report.

We thank the management and staff for their cooperation during our review.

If you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact DeWitt Roberts at (626) 293-1101.

JTM:DR:CC:asl

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS
Richard Shumsky, Chief Probation Officer
Jeanette Gray, Executive Director, New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc.
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc.
New Horizon #1
313 West Las Flores Dr.
Altadena, CA 91001
Phone: (626) 798-6218
License No.: 191221413
Rate Classification Level: 9**

I. Facility and Environment

(Facility Based - No Sample)

Method of assessment – Observation and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The New Horizon #1 Group Home (Group Home or Agency) is located in a residential community. The exterior of the Group Home is not well maintained. Specifically, the yard is not landscaped, the exterior walls of the Group Home are dirty and the paint is faded. There were no observable safety hazards.

The interior of the Group Home is sparsely furnished. The living room furniture is scratched, the heater covers in the living room and the hallway areas are dirty and rusted, and there is dirt and debris inside the heater floor opening. In the kitchen, the wall near the stove is splattered with oil, the vent is dirty and oily, and the top of the water heater has several layers of dust.

The residents' bathroom has a significant amount of mold on the ceiling and one of the bathroom walls has a hole near the medicine cabinet.

The children's pillows are worn and dirty, some of the pillow cases are torn and stained, most of the blankets are worn, and some of the blankets are torn. The dressers are scratched, the walls in the bedrooms are dirty and have patches of different color paint, there are spider webs on the ceiling, and the doors and windows are dirty. In addition, there are yellow water stains on the ceiling in bedroom number two.

The Group Home has board games, a TV, and a VCR. However, there is no outdoor recreational equipment that is age appropriate or accessible to the residents. In addition, there is an insufficient amount of books.

There is a sufficient supply of frozen food, meat, canned goods, bakery items, and fresh fruit. The food is accessible, appropriately dated, and properly stored.

Recommendations

1. New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc. management:

- a. Improve the exterior landscaping of the Group Home.
- b. Clean and paint the exterior walls of the Group Home.
- c. Repair or replace the living room furniture and bedroom dressers.
- d. Replace heater covers in the living room and the hallway area.
- e. Remove dirt and debris from the heater floor opening.
- f. Clean the walls, ceilings, doors, and windows throughout the Group Home.
- g. Clean the vent and the water heater in the kitchen.
- h. Remove mold from the ceiling in the residents' bathroom.
- i. Repair the wall in the residents' bathroom.
- j. Paint the walls in the residents' bedrooms.
- k. Replace all worn, dirty, and torn pillows and linens.
- l. Remove water stains from the ceiling in bedroom number two, and investigate and repair the cause of the stains.
- m. Provide residents with age-appropriate and accessible outdoor recreational equipment.
- n. Provide residents with a sufficient quantity of age-appropriate books and reading materials.

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The residents meet the Agency's population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Residents received a complete initial diagnostic assessment after being admitted into the Agency's program.

The Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) are current, realistic, measurable, and time specific. There was documentation to support the placement worker's participation in the development or update of the NSPs.

The quarterly reports are current, comprehensive, and appropriately focused on the goals of the NSP.

The residents are provided with psychological testing, and emotional and developmental counseling as required by the Program Statement.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

III. Educational and Emancipation Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The residents attend a non-public school. The records for both residents contain current semester report cards and/or progress reports. Residents reported that they are provided with a sufficient amount of daily educational stimulation away from school and feel that the Agency is supportive of their academic progress.

The Agency's program includes the development of residents' daily living skills. The residents are involved in the planning and preparation phase of meals. Hygiene care is discussed as needed.

Residents are too young to participate in emancipation and vocational programs.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

IV. Recreation and Activities

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The Agency provides its residents opportunities to participate in recreational activities.

The residents expressed satisfaction with the recreational activities and stated that the recreation schedules are followed.

The Group Home utilizes local community organizations for recreational and program resources. The residents reported that they participate in planning some of the activities. The residents have free time and are able to participate in self-selected activities.

Transportation is provided to and from the activities.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

V. Psychotropic Medication

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents for four case files

Comments:

The residents have current court authorizations for psychotropic medications. However, there is no documentation confirming that three of the four children are routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Medication distribution logs are properly maintained.

Recommendation

- 2. New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc. management ensure that documentation is maintained to confirm all residents receiving psychotropic medications receive monthly psychiatric evaluations.**

VI. Personal Rights

Method of assessment – Resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Residents expressed satisfaction with the Agency and its staff. Residents participate in an initial orientation and the Group Home's policies and procedures are posted. Residents reported that they feel safe in the Group Home and that there is no interference with their daily living functions.

Residents reported satisfaction with the taste of the food and with their ability to participate in menu development. They reported that there is sufficient staff supervision and expressed satisfaction with the quality of their interactions with most staff.

Residents reported that they are assigned chores to complete that are reasonable and not too demanding. Residents are able to have visitors and make and receive personal telephone calls. They are permitted to contact their probation officers, attorneys, and family members as needed. Residents are able to attend weekly religious services of their choice and feel that the Agency is respectful of their cultural lifestyles. The Agency allows the residents to celebrate holidays.

Residents reported that the discipline policies are consistently enforced and that there are fair and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Residents are aware of their right to refuse medication.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

VII. Clothing and Allowance

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The Agency provides appropriate clothing and items of necessity. The Group Home supplies its residents with the required \$50 monthly clothing allowance and the residents are given the opportunity to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to residents is of good quality and of sufficient quantity.

The Agency does not always provide the residents with the required minimum weekly base allowance. If the residents break or damage items, the residents do not receive an allowance until they repay the Agency for the items or the repairs. Residents are permitted to spend their allowances as they choose when they receive allowances.

The Agency provides residents with adequate personal care items and adequate storage.

Residents are provided with regular opportunities to maintain photo albums/life books.

Recommendation

3. **New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc. management provide residents with at least the required weekly minimum base allowance.**

**New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc.
New Horizon #2
42 W. Mountain View St.
Altadena, CA 91001
Phone: (626) 798-1854
License No.: 197600004
Rate Classification Level: 9**

I. Facility and Environment

(Facility Based - No Sample)

Method of assessment – Observation and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The New Horizon #2 Group Home (Group Home or Agency) is located in a residential community. The exterior of the Group Home is not well maintained. Specifically, the entrance porch steps have chipped paint, the entrance light is missing a cover, and the paint near the entrance has scratches. The exterior paint of the Group Home is dirty. Trash, dirt, and debris are scattered throughout the back yard. The yard is not landscaped and is overgrown with weeds in some areas. The pool is dirty and is covered with green algae presenting a health and safety hazard.

The interior of the Group Home is adequately furnished, however, the resident bedrooms are unkempt and dirty.

The living room and den are cluttered with papers, boxes, and old dusty equipment. The entertainment center in the living room is broken and the ceiling in the den is dirty. In the kitchen, the cabinet doors do not close, the ceiling is dirty, and the oven is broken. In the dining area, the table is chipped and the chairs have torn vinyl. In addition, the dining area is cluttered with broken equipment and shoes.

In the residents' bathroom, there is mold, the ceiling vent is dirty, and there is no toilet paper holder.

Windows in all of the bedrooms are dirty. In bedroom number one, the windows are covered with torn and stained sheets instead of curtains. Bedroom number two is dirty, the dresser is scratched, the carpet has stains, the closet is very messy, and the residents' clothes are scattered around the beds and the floor.

In bedroom number three, the carpet is stained, the ceiling is stained and dirty, and the dresser is missing a drawer.

The Group Home has board games, a TV, and a VCR. However, there is no age appropriate recreational equipment. In addition, there is not a sufficient supply of books.

The refrigerator contained a large amount of food that had expired or was not dated, and some of the food appeared spoiled. We brought this matter to the Group Home's attention and the food items were immediately discarded.

Recommendations

- 1. New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc. management:**
 - a. Paint the porch steps.**
 - b. Replace missing light cover near the entrance.**
 - c. Remove all the dirt and debris from the back yard.**
 - d. Improve the landscaping of the yard.**
 - e. Clean the pool to ensure the health and safety of the residents.**
 - f. Clean and/or paint the exterior of the Group Home.**
 - g. Remove all debris and unused equipment from the living room and den areas.**
 - h. Repair or replace the entertainment center in the living room.**
 - i. Clean the ceilings in the den, living room, and kitchen.**
 - j. Repair or replace the kitchen cabinets.**
 - k. Repair the kitchen oven.**
 - l. Replace broken dining room furniture.**
 - m. Remove broken equipment and shoes from the eating area.**
 - n. Remove mold from the residents' bathroom.**
 - o. Clean air vent in the residents' bathroom.**
 - p. Install a toilet tissue holder in the residents' bathroom.**
 - q. Clean the windows in the residents' bedrooms.**

- r. **Install curtains in bedroom number one.**
- s. **Assist residents with organizing their clothes and personal items.**
- t. **Repair or replace all broken and scratched dressers.**
- u. **Clean or replace dirty carpet in the residents' bedrooms.**
- v. **Remove stains from the ceiling in bedroom number three.**
- w. **Provide residents with age-appropriate and accessible outdoor recreational equipment.**
- x. **Provide residents with a sufficient quantity of age appropriate books and reading materials.**
- y. **Properly date food items and dispose of expired food timely.**

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The residents meet the Agency's population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Residents received a complete initial diagnostic assessment after being admitted into the Agency's program.

The Needs and Services Plan (NSP) for one resident is not realistic, measurable, and time specific. There was no documentation to support the placement worker's participation in the development or update of the NSP. The other resident's Needs and Services Plan (NSP) is not current.

The quarterly reports are not comprehensive as they do not address specific goals.

The residents are provided with psychological testing, and emotional and developmental counseling as required by the Program Statement.

Recommendations

- 2. New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc. management:**
 - a. Maintain current Needs and Services Plans for all residents.**

- b. **Create Needs and Services Plans which are realistic, measurable, and time specific.**
- c. **Provide documentation to show placement workers' participation in the development and update of the Needs and Services Plans.**
- d. **Develop comprehensive quarterly reports that address the goals stated in the residents' Needs and Services Plans.**

III. Educational and Emancipation Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Group Home residents attend public schools. The records for both residents contain current semester report cards and/or progress reports for the residents. Residents reported that they are provided with a sufficient amount of daily educational stimulation away from school and feel that the Group Home is supportive of their academic progress.

The Agency's program includes the development of residents' daily living skills. The residents are involved in the planning and preparation phase of meals. Hygiene care is discussed as needed and employment preparation encouraged.

Residents participate in emancipation and vocational programs.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

IV. Recreation and Activities

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The Agency provides its residents opportunities to participate in recreational activities. The residents expressed satisfaction with the recreational activities and stated that the recreation schedules are followed.

The Group Home utilizes local community organizations for recreational and program resources. The residents reported that they participate in planning some of the activities. The residents have free time and are able to participate in self-selected activities.

Transportation is provided to and from the activities.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

V. Psychotropic Medication

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents for two case files

Comments:

The residents have current court authorizations for psychotropic medications. However, there is no documentation confirming that the children are routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Medication distribution logs are properly maintained.

Recommendation

- 3. New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc. management ensure that documentation is maintained to confirm all residents receiving psychotropic medications receive monthly psychiatric evaluations.**

VI. Personal Rights

Method of assessment – Resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

Residents expressed satisfaction with the Agency and its staff. Residents participate in an initial orientation and the Group Home's policies and procedures are posted. Residents reported that they feel safe in the Group Home and that there is no interference with their daily living functions.

Residents reported satisfaction with the taste of the food and with their ability to participate in menu development. They reported that there is sufficient staff supervision and expressed satisfaction with the quality of their interactions with most staff.

Residents reported that they are assigned chores to complete on a daily basis that are reasonable and not too demanding. Residents are able to have visitors and make and receive personal telephone calls. They are permitted to contact their social workers, attorneys, and family members as needed. Residents are able to attend weekly religious services of their choice and feel that the Agency is respectful of their cultural lifestyles. The Agency allows the residents to celebrate holidays.

Residents reported that the discipline policies are consistently enforced and that there are generally fair and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior. However, residents reported that at times they are unfairly restricted from participating in activities because occasionally all residents are disciplined if several residents misbehave. This was discussed with management who stated that their policy would be revised.

Residents are aware of their right to refuse medication.

Recommendation

- 4. New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc. management only restrict misbehaving residents from activities.**

VII. Clothing and Allowance

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

Sample size for resident interviews: Two

Comments:

The Agency provides appropriate clothing, items of necessity, and allowances to the residents. The Group Home supplies its residents with the required \$50 monthly clothing allowance and the residents are given the opportunity to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to residents is of good quality and of sufficient quantity.

The Agency provides the residents with the required minimum base allowance, which they are able to increase according to the Agency's behavioral system. Residents are permitted to spend their allowances as they choose.

The Agency provides residents with adequate personal care items and adequate storage.

Residents are not provided with an opportunity to maintain photo albums/life books.

Recommendation

- 5. New Horizon/Sydia Group Home, Inc. management provide residents with regular opportunities to maintain photo albums/life books.**